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Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 VO-05 HA-05 CA-01 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 /090 W
----------062435 170900Z /11
R 170737Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9964
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
INS WASHDC

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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: IRC COMMISSION MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER UPADIT

1. SUMMARY: THE IRC COMMISSION MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER UPADIT FEBRUARY 13. CHAIRMAN LEO CHERNE STATED THAT THE COMMISSION'S PURPOSE WAS TO ENCOURAGE GREATER AMERICAN RESPONSIBILITY FOR INDOCHINESE REFUGEES. FUTURE U.S. PROGRAMS SHOULD HAVE CONTINUITY, DE-EMPHASIZE NUMERICAL QUOTAS, AND RECOGNIZE THAI SENSIBILITY TOWARD VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS AMONG THE REFUGEES. UPADIT STRESSED THE LARGE NUMBER OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEES CURRENTLY IN THAILAND AND THEIR EFFECT ON THAI SECURITY AND THE THAI ECONOMY. UPADIT PROMISED THAI COOPERATION ON BOAT REFUGEES PROVIDED THAT THEY MOVE OUT OF COUNTRY RAPIDLY. END SUMMARY.

2. LEO CHERNE, CHAIRMAN OF AN INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE
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COMMISSION CURRENTLY VISITING THAILAND TO EXAMINE THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE SITUATION, MET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER UPADIT PACHARIYANGKUN FEBRUARY 13. OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION INCLUDED JOUHN RICHARDSON, THELMA RICHARDSON, BAYARD RUSTIN, MSGR. JOHN AHERN, AND STEVEN YOUNG. CHERNE EXPLAINED THAT HIS GROUP CONSISTED OF PRIVATE CITIZENS WHO HAD NO ASSOCIATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT. THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION CAME FROM DIF-

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FERENT WALKS OF LIFE AND REPRESENTED A WIDE RANGE OF AMERICAN OPINION. THE COMMISSION'S PURPOSE WAS TO INFLUENCE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES BECAUSE, IN HIS VIEW, THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT CARRIED A LARGE ENOUGH RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE REFUGEES. THE COMMISSION CAME TO THAILAND TO LEARN ABOUT THE REFUGEE SITUATION, PARTICULARLY SINCE THAILAND BEARS SUCH A HEAVY BURDEN BECAUSE OF PROXIMITY TO INDOCHINA. HE SAID "WE HAVE NO ILLUSION THAT WE KNOW BETTER THAN YOU HOW YOUR ROLE SHOULD BE PLAYED."

3. CHERNE SAID THAT THE COMMISSION, A SELF-SELECTED INSTRUMENT OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, WOULD RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES WITH RECOMMENDATIONS. WHILE THE COMMISSION WOULD NOT KNOW UNTIL THE END OF THE WEEK WHAT THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE SOME PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS WERE THAT FUTURE PROGRAMS HAD TO HAVE CONTINUITY, AND PREVIOUS EMPHASIS ON NUMBERS ALONE POSED DIFFICULTIES. ADD-ITIONALLY, HE NOTED THAT THE THAI HAVE GREATER PROBLEMS IN ABSORBING SOME ETHNIC GROUPS THAN OTHERS.

4. UPADIT EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE FOR THE CONSTRUCTIVE AND CHARITABLE EFFORTS OF THE IRC. HE SAID THAT HE KNEW THE COM-MISSION WAS IN AN EXCELLENT POSITION TO BRING THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEM TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. HE POINTED OUT THAT THAILAND IS NOW CONFRONTED WITH THE TASK OF CARING FOR NEARLY 100,000 REFUGEES. MORE WERE ON THE WAY. THEY REPRESENTED A STRAIN ON THE ECONOMY; AND THAI SECURITY WAS
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INVOLVED. THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM OF THE BOAT PEOPLE NEEDED GREATER INTERNATIONALIZATION.

5. CHERNE NOTED THAT THAILAND WAS WORKING TOWARD MORE NORMAL RELATIONS WITH CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM, NEITHER OF WHICH CARED FOR THE DEPARTURE OF ITS CITIZENS TO BECOME REFUGEES. HE ASKED WHETHER AT SOME POINT THAILAND WOULD BECOME LESS HOSPITABLE TOWARD THE REFUGEES OR POSSIBLY CONTEMPLATE RETURNING THEM. UPADIT ACKNOWLEDGED THE OPENING, JUST A DAY OR SO PREVIOUSLY, OF THE SRV EMBASSY IN BANGKOK. HE SAID RECENT TALKS WITH IENG SARY IN PHNOM PENH HAD NOT YET RESULTED IN AN AGREEMENT TO EXCHANGE AMBASSADORS. UPADIT SAID THAT IN CONTEMPLATING REPATRIATION OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES, THERE ARE TWO GROUPS TO CONSIDER. THE OLD GROUP OF 40,000 TO 50,000 WHO CAME IN AFTER DIEN BIEN PHU AND HAVE BEEN HERE THIRTY YEARS, AND THE NEW ONES WHO HAVE ARRIVED SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF SOUTH VIETNAM. FOR THE REPATRIATION OF EITHER GROUP, "I ALREADY FORESEE PROBLEMS."

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 VO-05 CA-01 HA-05 AID-05 /090 W
----------062596 170859Z /11
R 170737Z FEB 78
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6. CHERNE ASKED IF THE UNITED STATES AND OTHERS TOOK ALL OF THE VIETNAMESE AND THE CAMBODIANS, WOULD THE THAI CONSIDER LOCAL RESETTLEMENT OF THE REST OF THE REFUGEES? SPECIFICALLY, COULD ANY SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF LAO BE LOCALLY SETTLED? UPADIT REPLIED "OF COURSE" TO THE FIRST QUESTION, BUT IMPLIED THAT THE THAI WERE EXPLORING WITH THE UNHCR POSSIBILITIES OF VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION OF LAO. UPADIT ASKED WHETHER THIRD COUNTRIES COULD POOL THEIR ARRANGEMENTS BETTER. CHERNE REPLIED THAT THE COMMISSION'S INFLUENCE WOULD BE PRIMARILY IN THE UNITED STATES, BUT THAT ONCE THE UNITED STATES HAS A MORE REGULARIZED PROGRAM, OTHER COUNTRIES MAY BE STIMULATED BY IT. RUSTIN POINTED OUT THAT WHATEVER OTHER COUNTRIES CAN DO TO EXTEND GREATER RELIEF TO INDOCHINESE REFUGEES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA SHOULD BE DONE QUICKLY. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE UNITED STATES IS MADE UP OF MANY DIFFERENT PEOPLES, ALL OF WHOM, INCLUDING THE INDIANS, WERE ONCE REFUGEES. THE COMMISSION WAS AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS OF
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THAILAND, BUT THE COMMISSION WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTIES IN CONVINC-ING THE POOR IN AMERICA, WHERE THERE IS SO MUCH UNEMPLOYMENT, THAT WE SHOULD ADMIT MORE PEOPLE.

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7. UPADIT SAID THAT THE SAME PROBLEM EXISTED IN THAILAND. IF THAILAND HELPED REFUGEES, THE POOR PEOPLE WOULD CRITICIZE THE GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT FORMER PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT HAD WANTED TO GIVE EACH REFUGEE TWO RAI OF LAND. THERE WAS A STRONG REACTION IN THE PRESS AND FROM THE THAI PEOPLE. THE ARGUMENT WAS THAT REFUGEES WOULD HAVE A MUCH BETTER LIFE THAN THE THAI, WHO OWNED THE COUNTRY.

8. UPADIT SAID THAT A FURTHER DIFFICULTY WAS THAT MOST OF THE REFUGEES THAT OTHER COUNTRIES HAD ACCEPTED HAD BEEN THE CREAM. THE REMAINDER WERE THE POOR AND THE CRIPPLED. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT IF, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WERE NO OPPORTUNITIES FOR A LAO DOCTOR TO SETTLE IN THAILAND, HE WOULD OPT TO GO ABROAD TO AVOID IDLENESS IN THE CAMP. WE MENTIONED THAT THE AMERICAN PROGRAM EMPHASIZES THE ACCEPTANCE OF CLOSE RELATIVES OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THAT RELATIVES WERE AN UNEVEN LOT, NOT NECESSARILY THE CREAM.

9. UPADIT SAID "WE ARE PREPARED TO COOPERATE ON BOAT PEOPLE. THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND HAS NO INTENTION TO PUSH THEM BACK." THEY MUST, HOWEVER, BE MOVED OUT RAPIDLY.

10. YOUNG MENTIONED THAT HE WAS IMPRESSED THAT MANY MINISTRY OF INTERIOR PEOPLE THAT HE HAD MET HAD COME FROM SERVICE IN NORTHEAST THAILAND. THEY EXTRAPOLATED THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD THE VIETNAMESE FROM THAT EXPERIENCE. THIS NEW GROUP OF REFUGEES, HOWEVER, HAD DIFFERENT ATTITUDES. PERHAPS THE RTG NEED NOT BE SO CONCERNED ABOUT SECURITY PROBLEMS FROM THEM. THE REFUGEES IN THE SONGKHLA CAMP, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD TURNED OVER TWO SUSPECTED
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COMMUNISTS AMONG THEM TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES. UPADIT REPLIED THAT THE THAI DID DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THOSE REFUGEES WHO WERE FRIENDLY TO THAILAND AND THOSE WHO WERE NOT.
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Status: NATIVE
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